



AMUSEMENTS

Robert Downing, the favorite American tragedian, needs no introduction to this public. From the beginning of his career to the present, when he is in the mouth of everyone as the legitimate successor in heavy tragedy of the great masters of the art, Forrest and McCullough, Mr. Downing's rise in public estimation, keeping pace with his art, has been steady and constant. There have been no frenzied efforts at advertising, no sudden leaps into sudden notoriety, but always faithful work, well directed effort, and the natural result of satisfactory performances. His art, his reputation and business have increased steadily and together, keeping even pace with each other. Mr. Downing's entire stage career shows the possession of uncommon common sense. He began in the best school of drama, the stock company. When his taste for the historic art asserted itself he secured the position of call boy in John T. Ford's Washington Theatre. He was a clever apprentice, and did not remain a call boy long. He was soon playing small parts, then some important ones, and finally became leading man of the company. He made a tour of the South in the support of John McCullough, and again of Edwin Booth. His intelligent readings attracted the attention of the latter great artist and lovely character, and Booth asked for the loan of the rising young actor during his engagement in New York. That was the beginning of Mr. Downing's success, for it drew to him the eyes of the leaders of the profession, as well as of the public. It was also the beginning of a friendship between him and Mr. Booth that continued until the latter's death. Mr. Downing was next found in the support of Mary Anderson, playing Ingomar acceptably to her Parthenia, Romeo to her Juliet, and Master Walter to her Julia. Then he played opposite parts to Joseph Jefferson in comedy. Next he had experience in the better class of melodrama. It was a pretty broad foundation which he had laid by this time, stock company, tragedy, romantic drama, comedy and melodrama and he believed then that he had received a sufficient training to give him the breadth, the depth and finish requisite to undertake the higher forms of dramatic interpretation for himself. But even then he pursued a conservative course. He did not attempt everything at once, nor try to produce all the great plays known to the tragic stage in a single season, as many unseasoned stars do. He mastered one character at a time, making a success of it before he attempted another. He began in 1885 to star as the Gladiator. That in itself was a large undertaking, some of the giants of the stage having illuminated the role with their genius. But though there were many innovations in his interpretation, he compelled the critics to acknowledge that he was virile and intelligent, and that moreover he had the power of moving his audiences. Having mastered this part he next took up *Virginus*. Here he encountered even greater prejudice in some quarters, for *Virginus* had been a favorite role of the late John McCullough, and Mr. Downing made many changes from the interpretation of the artist, and made the same points by different and original methods. But in the end it was settled that though he departed from the traditions his *Virginus* was forceful and admirable. Ingomar was added to his repertory, a recovery of his work with Mary Anderson. Next he turned his attention to Shake-

speare's "Julius Caesar," paying equal attention to the roles of *Bru-tus* and *Antony*, and playing them alternately with credit. "Damon and Pythias" then became the object of his study, and to better understand John Banim's play, which possessed peculiar interest for him because of his earnest espousal of the welfare of the Knights of Pythias, he went deeply into the study of history. "The Gladiator" will be produced at the Lansing, Monday evening.

"They're off! See how they dash away! What a pretty sight! How lovely Viola Arthur looks mounted upon Missouri Girl!" Such are the expressions that greet the great racing scene in "The Derby Winner," Alfred H. Spink's celebrated racing drama, which will have its presentation at the Lansing, Thursday, Oct. 4th. "The Derby Winner" is a genuine type of the racing drama. It is distinctively alone in its class. The play is a triumph in its clean, pretty and attractive reproduction of life on the turf, and the many situations that are introduced to depict that life in all its phases, from grand stand patronage to the scenes as the stables, are both strong and unique. The narrative is splendidly told and Alfred H. Spink, the talented author, turf writer, practical race track manager and turf devotee, is to be congratulated upon having evolved a play that is so full of human interest and so strong in its splendid make up. It has the element of originality moulded by novelty, and that of

itself will certainly be refreshing as it is dramatically unfolded on the Lansing theatre stage next week. The stage pictures are bright and taking and do not fail to arouse enthusiastic demonstrations. In short, "The Derby Winner" is a go from start to finish, and is full of that life, animation, picturesqueness and exciting episodes that are so near and dear to the hearts of the turf. The company is exceptionally strong in its entirety. Fifty people are in the cast. Such well-known artists as Frank Dayton, the hero of the play, who was formerly with the Frohmans; Josephine Morse, one of the best emotional actresses on the stage; Miss Jessie Hatcher, charming in her characterization of the gay widow; Max Miller, the famous German comedian, as the Grand Army of the Republic member; Arthur Dunn, who stands ace high in popular estimation and less than five feet actual measurement and Frank Ormonde as the villain. All have parts that are especially fitted for them. Arthur Dunn was never as funny in any part he has essayed in Henderson's Extravaganza company, or where he has ever appeared, as in the part of *Tommy Bell* in "The Derby Winner."

Georgia Cayvan will star. "A year ago," she says, "two offers were made to star me. I told Daniel Frohman, my manager, about them. Mr. Frohman then offered to star me himself. He has written to me to that effect. I shall continue as leading women of the Lyceum Stock company throughout this season. That is to say, I shall not star until next fall at the earliest. My association with the Lyceum Stock Company has been pleasant to me, and I hope it has been pleasant to the audiences of that theater. But I am desirous to appear in plays which the Lyceum stage is too small to hold. Within the last season or two there have been quite a number of pieces produced there that have contained parts to which I am not adapted."

Mrs. Henry Vandenhoff, who is playing the part of Martha in "Faust" with the John Griffith Company, is a careful and sterling actress who respects the honor of the traditional name she bears. She has been seen in this city a number of times and her work has always been commended. This is the first time she has undertaken to play the part of an eccentric old woman and she gives a judicious, praiseworthy performance as Martha.